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# THE "AMERICA" CUP RACE.

BY THE HON. CHARLES RUSSELL.

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IF association with Sir Thomas Lipton through all this business and pleasure of the "Shamrock" is a credential for such an article as this, it may be claimed by the present writer. He was with Sir Thomas Lipton when the building of the yacht was first discussed, in the spring of 1898. He saw the "Shamrock" grow upon the stocks and take her plunge into the water; and, as a guest on the "Erin," he watched the trial trips of the "Shamrock" in the Solent during this summer, and was on board her with her owner when she won her maiden victory over the "Britannia."

Repeated conversations with Sir Thomas Lipton at these various stages, and at all the intervening ones, go to the making of this article, which may be taken to represent his sentiments, if it has not succeeded in repeating his words.

To win back the Cup and to win it for Ireland has been, indeed, a dream of Sir Thomas Lipton's for many years. Belonging to one of the multitude of Ulster families who have emigrated, not to America like President McKinley's, but to Scotland, he found himself, in early manhood, a dweller on the banks of the Clyde, the great river that gives Glasgow not only its means of livelihood, but also its sport, its pleasures, and its close touch with the sea.

Yachting was, as a matter of course, in the air; and the fact that "The Cup" had gone to America from Cowes in 1851, and had stayed there, somehow impressed itself upon his imagination, even as a boy, and suggested vaguely the idea that he himself might, perhaps, one day try to bring it back. Ten years ago, during one of the more than fifty crossings of the Atlantic Sir

Thomas has made on pleasure and business, he happened to meet Mr. Fife, of Fairlie, the designer of the "Shamrock," and a talk with him brought the old idea into some sort of perspective, so that Sir Thomas wrote to Mr. Lane, then sitting in Parliament for Queens-town Division of County Cork, and now the General Manager in Ireland of a New York insurance company, offering to supply the sinews of war if a likely boat could be built in Ireland. The difficulties, however, were too many, and hours of leisure were too few.

Time passed; many things had happened since that proposal was made, including Lord Dunraven's challenge, with its unhappy sequel, when, on a long railway journey with a friend, the idea was revived and the die was really cast.

Perhaps it was the stimulating effect that movement has on some minds; but the topic of the challenge, once started, went forward with leaps and bounds. Begun in France, it trundled with the travellers through the Mont Cenis Tunnel, and was their companion over Piedmont, and till Rome was reached. There the travellers' ways parted; but Sir Thomas, first by the Bay of Naples, then a little later in Ceylon, and his companion on his return to London from Rome, kept the yacht that was to be named the "Shamrock" still before them. Cosmopolitan as these origins sound, and as the race itself must be, the thoughts of the two Irishmen did not travel so very far afield; they recurred to Ireland at every point and turning.

The boat was to be an Irish boat, not in ownership and name only, but, as far as might be, in the building and in the manning of her as well.

When Sir Thomas Lipton returned home after his visit to the East, he found his friend had not been idle, but had justified the trust placed in him to push on with the venture. Many preliminary difficulties had been removed, and matters were awaiting to be dealt with finally by the master hand of Sir Thomas Lipton, without further loss of time. The great Irish firm, Messrs. Harland and Wolff, foremost among owners of those shipbuilding yards at Belfast which owe their prosperity in great part to Transatlantic communication, were called to the councils. Their decision that a racing-yacht, with its almost jeweller's metal-work, was out of the scope of their ordinary business, led to the commission's going, to its giver's deep regret, away from

Ireland, and finally to the Thames, where the Messrs. Thornycroft have made a specialty of work of the kind. All the same, the "Shamrock" is an Irish boat, and its challenge went forth from the Royal Ulster Yacht Club, the leading club of the province, with Lord Dufferin for its Commodore—first famous by his "Yachting in High Latitudes."

Americans are Englishmen's cousins in name; they are often Irishmen's in fact, with the flotilla of emigrant ships to connect the two shores; and Lord Dufferin can claim, besides his common cousinship with Americans, a special one with General Sheridan.

One does not envy the man who has to write Lord Dufferin's epitaph in brief space; for—if it is to please all—it will commemorate him, not merely as a Viceroy of India and a Governor-General of Canada, but also as the son of the lady who wrote "The Lament of the Irish Emigrant," and as one who spent the end of his own eventful life in the home of his boyhood by the shore of Belfast Lough.

On the flag of the Royal Ulster Yacht Club, which the "Shamrock" flies (in addition to her own green shamrock), is an ominous device—the red hand of Ulster. The legend is that there was a race at sea for supremacy; and that he who first touched shore was to be king. O'Neill was behind, when he chopped off his hand, flung it ashore, and so won the crown.

The obvious moral is that the competitor must be thorough in his striving for victory, and that he must shirk no sacrifice if he would win.

All the same, despite this gory emblem, the owner of "Shamrock" will come from the contest unmaimed, whether winning or losing. He does not feel he is on the brink of a battle with foemen, by whom it is a disgrace to be beaten; or that, if he wins, his victory will come at the cost of the loss of friends or friendships. On both sides, the race will be entered upon with the best of tempers and as between comrades. If there has been any chatter about past or possible future friction with American sportsmen, his ears have given it no toleration, and one is really ashamed to accord it in print even a disclaiming allusion. The conditions of the New York Yacht Club were accepted *en bloc*, without a single emendation, by the representatives of himself and of the Royal Ulster Club who went at his request last August to New York. His request to them was to do so, for he knew that nothing would

be left out by the New York Yacht Club which would ensure a good race or which would safeguard the competitors from any misunderstanding; and his representatives found his anticipation was absolutely correct. On every point anxiety was shown to meet difficulties.

The matters of measurement and mark-boats or overcrowding had unfortunately been made delicate ones, no doubt; but they did not bring about even a discussion between us. As for overcrowding, Congress itself, independently of this particular race, has placed the very serious responsibility of keeping the course clear for the combatants upon the Secretary of the Treasury and has given him ample means of discharging it. An amendment of the Navigation Laws, approved in the May of 1896, empowers the Secretary of the Treasury to employ cutters at "regattas, amateur or professional," to keep out of harm's way, as it is delicately put, "excursion steamers, yachts, oarsmen, and all craft"—yes, all craft whatsoever—that is certain. No doubt Mr. Secretary counts this responsibility not the least of his many duties.

Interchanges of sportsmanlike rivalry, conducted in a proper "give and take" spirit, are the best of bonds between nations as between men. England thinks better, not worse, of Australia since Australia beat her at cricket. Nor will anything but goodwill be the outcome of this challenge—goodwill between Americans, Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotsmen—people so vitally intermixed that where one wins the other cannot wholly lose. Frankly, as an Irishman, bred in Scotland, and hustled by business into England, Sir Thomas Lipton desires to better America's present best, and to hold the Cup till the time comes when our best, in turn of fortune, is again bettered by America. If the "Shamrock" loses, the countries on this side of the Atlantic will have at least the consoling pride of fathers who see themselves outstripped by their own sons. The race, undecided, is delightful to anticipate, even though anxiously; and, however decided, it will never be less than delightful to the owner of the "Shamrock" in the retrospect. Keen as has been the interest taken in past contests, it is admitted by all that the enthusiasm which follows the "Shamrock," whether in Ireland, England or Scotland, is absolutely unprecedented in the history of the contest. Wherever the "Shamrock" appeared she was surrounded from morning till night by endless crowds of steamers and all kinds

of craft loaded down with her well-wishers. "Her departure for America"—to end in veritable words of Sir Thomas Lipton—"was a sight I shall never forget; and the voices of the great crowds singing the melody of 'The Dear Little Shamrock' I cannot recall without emotion. We had, too, a pleasant foretaste of America's welcome in the hearty cheers always given us by the many American liners which passed the 'Shamrock' in the Solent or on Southampton waters. All this I can read but one way, that there is a growing desire on both sides of the Atlantic for closer bonds and a more intimate friendship. If I should help toward such a consummation I should indeed feel satisfied."

CHARLES RUSSELL.